DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 342 HE 034 622

AUTHOR Hughes, Robin L.

TITLE Race in Educational Administration Programs: A Graduate Student's Perspective.

PUB DATE 2000-04-00

NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).

PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Black Students; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; *Educational Administration; *Graduate Students; Graduate Study; *Mentors; Minority Groups; Racial Attitudes; *Racial Bias; Research Needs; Social Support Groups

IDENTIFIERS African Americans

ABSTRACT

This paper presents some reflections on race and constructions of race as they operate and might operate on graduate programs in educational administration. An African American female graduate student at a large Texas university was asked to reflect on a set of questions prior to participating in a symposium on race in educational administration programs. The first question asked what the most pressing issues are with regard to providing support for students of color in educational administration. Establishing a community of mentoring, providing additional financial support, improving the climate by increasing racial sensitivity, and reducing the alienation experienced by the student of color are cited. The second question centered on the strategies currently being used at the university to support students of color in educational administration. Some recruitment and mentoring strategies used by individual professors are identified as helpful. Question three asked the graduate student to consider further efforts the university should make to increase the number of minority graduate students and improve the climate for them. Recruiting of graduate students and increased financial aid are cited. The final issue was to describe a race-conscious research agenda aimed at developing knowledge that would support students of color. Curriculum changes, more site visits to urban populations, changes that support student diversity, and more sensitive textbooks would all be aspects of a race conscious research agenda. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 461 342

Race in Educational Administration Programs: A Graduate Student's Perspective

Robin L. Hughes
Texas A&M University

Paper presented at

The American Educational Research Association
2000 Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana

April 24- 28, 2000

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. Hughes

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Author's Address

The University of Texas at El Paso
College of Education
Education Building
Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations
Educational Building, Room 507
El Paso, Texas 79968
(915) 747-7591

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Race in Educational Administration Programs:
A Graduate Students Perspective

Robin L. Hughes

During the Spring of 2000, I was ask to participate in a symposium at the American Educational Research Association's national educational conference entitled; "Race in Educational Administration Programs". The impetus of the symposium was to begin a dialogue among a diverse group of students, practitioners, and faculty about race and how constructions of race might readily influence graduate programs in educational administration. It was the symposium director's hope that this discussion would enable other administrators throughout the conference and thusly, the United States to continue thinking about race and what current role race plays in programs in higher education. The questions that were addressed are outlined as follows:

1. ***From your perspective, what do you see as the most pressing issues with regard to providing support to students of color in educational administration?***
2. ***At your institutional level, what strategies are currently being used to support students of color in educational administration and how effective do you believe these strategies to be?***
3. ***Given what we currently know about the impact of race and about race in higher education, what else could we be doing?***
4. ***What would a race-conscious research agenda, aimed at developing knowledge that would support students of color in educational administration programs look like?***

A diverse panel of educational administrators, each of which was an expert in their respective fields in educational administration was assembled. The symposium included the following group of participants; a department chair from the educational administration program of a research one institution; a female assistant professor in educational administration; an African-American president of a historically black college and noted international scholar; an Hispanic professor from a research one university; a White female international scholar and full professor,

and my perceptive, an African-American female that attended a large public white research one institution.

My perspective, although I do not consider it to be an expert opinion was requested in order to add a graduate student's voice to the discussion. Quite frankly, during the initial invitation, I was compelled to decline. I was hesitant to participate for two reasons; one due to an experience that I had in a course taught by an adjunct that will be described later in this paper, and the other, which is directly related to the expereince with the adjunct, was the possibility of having to serve as the Negro expert. Either way, I neither wanted to serve as the "token" nor the expert "Negro" panel member. In essence, I did not want my opinion or experiences to be wrongfully interpreted as the representative opinion of the multitude of African-American graduate students. After much deliberation with my dissertation advisor/ symposium discussant, and another panel member, I was assured that the facilitator of the symposium "got it", (a term that I have borrowed from a White female Assistant Professor at my current institution through casual conversation. The context in which it is used refers to the White colleagues that are able to admit that there is covert and overt forms of race-based inequality in education) and had no intentions of exploiting my experiences to a crowd of in order to place something cute on her vitae.

For the three months that followed the acceptance of the proposal, I contemplated how I would talk about my experiences. The following paper represents a "draft" of how I framed my responses to the questions.

Participants were asked to prepare the following four highlighted and italicized questions:

1. From your perspective what do you see as the most pressing issues with regard to providing support to student of color in educational administration?

- **A Community of Mentoring**

A significant amount of the literature cites mentoring as playing a role in the academic success of minority graduate students. However, from my perspective mentoring begins as early as recruiting new faculty into the department. For instance, the Department of Educational Administration at a research extensive university places significant responsibility of recruiting the new faculty on the current faculty members. Graduate students play an instrumental role in this process as well. We do not assume a passive role. This role that might be considered as a token by many departments on our campus, but we, graduate students, consider it a very important opportunity that allows us to participate in departmental decisions that will ultimately affect us and future graduate students. We are encouraged to meet with, and question the potential faculty member. The incumbent, and what he or she can add to the department is discussed amongst the faculty members and the graduate students during an open forum. We (graduate students) are invited, we attend, and our faculty listens.

Does this system work, from my perspective, yes? This reciprocity has not only enabled us to work in a very comfortable environment, but our department also tends to hire professors that are diverse in ethnicity and in gender. I will rest my case in saying that our last four hires were women, two of whom are faculty of color. Most importantly, however, is that they also demonstrate a philosophical commitment to diversity. In regards to scholarly research, their research reflects this same diversity. Faculty are actively engaged in research that supports a race-conscious agenda. One such professor has collected data from all over Texas that shows that our accountability system can work in districts that are high minority, high poverty. Another

conducts research that includes perspectives of the African American male experiences, and most recently she is reporting on the still present system of apartheid following participation in a year-long Fulbright fellowship in South Africa. A mid-range female professor participates in cross-cultural research with a faculty member of color at another Research One institution, and another female professor most recently has written on the subject of critical race theory and is always "down" to deconstruct the views of the majority. And given that she is a tenured full professor, simply put—she does not have to.

- **Financial Support**

In addition to mentoring, financial support is imperative. The literature is clear that financial resources play a critical role in the success of African American graduate students. It has been well documented that experiences as graduate assistants or teaching assistants are paramount to one's graduate career. However, Black students are far less likely than either White or Hispanic to be graduate assistants (Nettles, 1990). I would attribute nonparticipation to the unique histories of African American students. Black students do not typically have parental support or financial legacies that would enable them to join graduate programs without either working full time, attending the program as a part time student, or taking out student loans to defray costs.

In my own experience, I asked a professor where or if I could find additional funding, whether in the department or through other resources. His reply? "You could get another job off campus in the evenings." I am sure that he was perplexed by the blank stare on my face. Perhaps he had forgotten that I was a departmental graduate assistant, on financial aid, taking a full course load of 15 hours, collecting data, writing a dissertation and developing a research agenda—with three small children under the age of 5. In other words, it was sometimes difficult to find a free minute.

- **Climate**

Perceptions of the university climate also play a significant role and individuals may vary in their perceptions of the same environment. "This is particularly true when considering the climate for diverse groups. Although these are perceptions held by individuals, they cannot be taken lightly because perceptions are formed based on experiences within the environment, which also often determine future perceptions and behaviors. Educational research has also begun to link perceptions of the climate for diversity with students' satisfaction, social cohesion, and academic integration, which in turn, affects student educational progress" (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen, 1998). It is clear that the notion of feelings, attitudes, perceptions of the institutional climate, faculty, professional staff, and peer groups may be a better predictor of successful completion of the graduate school than academic preparation (Suen, 1983; Kemp, 1990). Accordingly, university graduate programs might benefit from becoming cognizant of their African American doctoral students' feelings and perceptions, especially in predominantly white universities (Patterson Stewart, K. et al , 1997). A campus that salutes the Confederate flag, has few initiatives in terms of diversity, only 35 faculty members of color out of thousands, and traditions that are typically non-inclusive, will most likely not fare well in terms of recruitment.

The institution in particular is guilty of harboring this type of monolithic atmosphere. Often people speak of how wonderful the surrounding city of University Village [pseudonym] is, especially in terms of raising children. I cannot help but wonder what motivates this attitude. For one, there exists a homogenous cultural atmosphere in the community that does little or nothing towards attracting minority candidates to graduate school or the professorate. The town is divided with the majority of minorities living in the heart of low SES sections of Clayton

[pseudonym] or government funded housing in University Village. The affluent people live in University Village or in the affluent sections of Clayton. In fact, the idea that there is a middle class or affluent African American populace is not true. The majority of African American residents in the two cities are poor, uneducated and are frequently visible on the campus as maintenance, food or housekeeping staff.

The university claims to be committed to diversity but when given the chance to show that they are committed, they simply do not walk the talk. For instance, although the University received whole-hearted support from the faculty and Faculty Senate, the chief university administration choked on requiring that students take a minority literature course or ethnic studies course. The division of Student Affairs passed on hiring an African American male administrator with a Ph.D. and over ten years experience in student activities to hire a white male with fewer credentials, none in student affairs or higher education, and less experience in student affairs who has since left the position. He did have support however, from a very strong network of administrators on campus. They also passed on an opportunity to host one of the nation's leading African American literary journals, which would have helped attract minority faculty. (Battalion 2000). The university claimed that it would have been too expensive. However, the university finds money to fund things that it really wants to do, like building a multi-million dollar recreational facility or adding to the football stadium.—two very noteworthy accomplishments. Attracting minority scholars and students appears to be low on their priority list. The message that the university sends out is loud and clear, and this shows in the number of faculty and students of color attending the university.

Popular opinion claims that this university is not committed to diversity. The facts are clear; the university does not actively hire minorities and women—but this program does. In fact, we

have actively recruited and hired 5 women to make a complete faculty of 15. There are two African American women on our faculty. What's the likelihood of this demographic make-up at a large conservative, public white institution that displays the Confederate Flag in front of the student center, and sits across the street from some place called the Dixie Chicken? Slim to none, if you contrast those numbers with the fact that there exists only 35 African American faculty members out of over 1000 on the entire campus, and no one seems to be able to account for all 35. The point is: this amorphous university does not do the initial hiring and recruiting; it is done at the departmental level. If the university is not diverse, in terms of its faculty and students, it is up to the individual departments to recruit and hire and be committed to diversity. It's a simple formula. A diverse faculty that is committed to diversity is more likely to be prepared to mentor a diverse student population. And a diverse student population is more likely to be attracted to a diverse faculty make-up. It "aint rocket science", but it is a simple formula that cannot be solved if you are not hiring faculty that are committed to diversity.

- **Missing Voice and The "Negro" Spokesperson**

Unfortunately, students complain that they feel isolated, alienated or just invisible in the classroom or the program. For instance, in a class that I took during my first year as a graduate student, I was required to read and discuss articles, and books that were written to a specific audience. I was not included in that audience. There were no female authors, no authors of color and little discourse that had to deal with people of color. I was the only African American in the class, which is typical of the program, and probably many or most of the programs at Texas A&M (There were only, at last count, 128 African American graduate students on the campus).

During one class period, I was "commissioned" to be the spokesperson for the exercise on Affirmative Action. The class required that we simulate town council or board meetings on a

weekly basis. During this particular class, I was chosen to take the lead on an Affirmative Action simulation. I was placed in the middle of a circle and my classmates were asked to phone in questions. They had the choice of either being pro or anti-Affirmative Action. The majority of the students took the position of antagonist. I was literally attacked from all points of the room. Two people came to my defense during a very hostile exercise. The class got out-of-hand and a classmate expressed his views to my favor and refused to participate in the discussion. He stopped the exercise—not the professor.

For the first time in my life, I was totally alienated to the point of being despondent. It was not the topic that frightened me as much as the relentless nature of the attack from students, most of whom I considered to be pretty good friends. Here they had a safe forum where they could "vent" and the professor, (I should clarify that this professor was an adjunct professor at the time and is no longer affiliated with the department) I assume allowed this riotous behavior under the aegis of academic freedom. Non-the-less, they were comfortable and were encouraged to do so. I could not believe that so many people, students, and my friends in Educational Administration had been detrimentally affected by affirmative action policies. They told stories of how they had been "hurt" or knew someone that had been "hurt" by affirmative action policies or initiatives. They spoke of the level playing field, and of how certain minorities were privileged by these affirmative action policies. They talked about jobs and positions that were unobtainable due to preferential treatment towards minority candidates They talked about endless scholarships that were available to ethnic minorities, and people whom they had known (all of whom were White) who were not admitted to college due to some preferential treatment enjoyed by ethnic minorities. But what they failed to do was to look at the diversity in the room and the program.

There were two ethnic minorities in the class, one Mexican-American and one African-American. They also failed to realize that most of them, White students, held powerful positions on campus, as directors, assistant provost, principals in schools, and that I at the time was a graduate assistant in the program, collected monthly food stamps, had three children on the federal WIC program, had approximately a negative fifty dollars in my checking account at all times and never new how I was going to pay my monthly rent. More importantly, they did not apply this same philosophy to the system that afforded them the privilege to call friends across campus to let them know when particular positions would be open and when to apply - a system that exists on this campus where over 95 % of upper administration positions are occupied by Anglos. A system called the good-old-boys network that more than vaguely resembles exactly what they had complained about so profusely. They also never talked about legacy, something that many major universities, including this one take into consideration during the "fair" admissions process.

This incident unfortunately is not an isolated event. There have been other incidents. One in particular, where a student, who is now a director on this particular campus was attacked by a classmate on this same issue. She was brought to tears during class. She was made the "Negro expert" and attacked. In other incidences, students describe either having to be the expert, being the defender of Civil Rights, the only one on a particular side of some racial issue or just plain old frightened to participate in some conversations. Of course these incidents do not imply that we should not begin to talk about race in our classrooms. In fact, we should encourage this discourse throughout our curriculum. We should also be aware that this type of discourse is often very difficult and may bring about certain emotions and conversations that are stressful and

perhaps revolutionary. However, leadership in the class should still continue to play a critical role in order that students feel safe and comfortable in an educational environment.

Unfortunately, in the cases that I spoke of feedback was never made available to other professors. I would venture to say that this is often the case in class settings. Students are afraid to speak up. In my particular case, I confronted the professor, who thankfully was employed as an adjunct for only one semester about being more inclusive of the readings and writings of ethnic minorities as well as women, and his reply was, "well, we tried to include these people in the Affirmative Action debate".

2. At your institutional level what strategies are currently being used to support students of color in educational administration and how effective do you believe these strategies to be?

A Professor in our program has committed the last twenty years to recruiting and teaching students of color in San Antonio. This was no accident. He did it on purpose. He saw a need to increase the pool of doctoral recipients of color who would become administrators in a school district that was largely diverse. He has graduated more doctoral students of color than any person on this campus. Recently, an Austin cohort was started to include a very diverse population of administrators in Austin. Again, this was no accident. It began because two professors saw a need for extending educational services to a district where there was a large presence of ethnic minorities.

In some cases, the Department has tweaked our clientele. For instance, our department noticed that the first cohort from another district was "not diverse"; it changed immediately. In addition, our Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education (SAAHE) faculty recruits at

conferences and colleges. In fact, one of our faculty members took some SAAHE paraphernalia with her to South Africa to serve as recruitment tools. These types of activities and programs are the result of a department that actively recruits and hires persons committed to diversity. Simply put: if you are not so committed, you need not apply. Another strategy that is used in our department is to interview each and every applicant. In this manner, an applicant that might otherwise fall through the cracks via conventional methods of GRE score evaluation are given a second chance.

My own experiences in this department have been mostly positive. Some, most, professors in our department walk the talk, so to speak. In other words, they say what they practice, and they practice what they preach. At one point, I was the only African American G.A. that worked for professors who were not ethnic minorities. It was not only a working relationship, but a scholarly one. During that time, I was invited to participate in several scholarly projects. I worked with two professors on a the university funded project where the initial charge was to document whether stakeholding groups in higher education share the cynicism of critics that claim that parents and other stakeholders are widely dissatisfied with higher education. After fighting them, and their suggested topic for two years, I took the data a step further and am using it now for dissertation. O.K., she has some good ideas. In addition, Mizz (a title that I have given to her) Lincoln has just placed a six page "memo" in my box in which she has asked whether I would like to participate in other research that will result in manuscripts and articles. My co-chairs have not just nurtured me through the dissertation process, but they have told me: "no, you can not reinvent the wheel;" " no you may not rewrite the Bible;" "no, you do not have twenty years to conduct the literature review on that particular subject;" and "no, you cannot save the world in approximately 250-300 pages". And, when all

else fails, there is the infamous "come-to-Jesus" talk typically conducted on the second floor breezeway of the education building. And, they were always right in the final analysis. Sometimes I felt as is if I had been poked and prodded, screamed at, and cussed. In fact, there were times when I walked away from conversations, had words with both committee chairs and routinely contemplated, although momentarily, leaving. However; luckily, I realized early in the relationship that what I was experiencing throughout my graduate career was mentoring whether I wanted to be or not.

3. Given what we currently know about the impact of race and about race in higher education, What else could we be doing?

We should be doing more in the area of recruiting. There should be someone traveling to Prairie View, and Paul Quinn, two HBCU's in the general vicinity of Clayton-University Village, as well as to the University of Houston and Texas Southern to recruit those students into the program. In addition to recruiting students at HBCU's, we should be recruiting ethnic minority students that attend Public White Universities, PWU's. Money is always a problem, but the Provost seems to always find funding for worthy events. In addition, we should make use of our development offices. Use all available resources to recruit. Perhaps, placing graduate students in recruiting positions would prepare them for positions in administration. More radical and comprehensive approaches need to be taken to bring about major change in the production of African American Ph. D.'s Tracking baccalaureate degree recipients and recruiting them via the computer could provide vital information and possibly identify potential ethnic minority students. This is currently being used by some institutions specifically to track black graduates in math and sciences (Borden, 2000).

Identifying and duplicating other programs in educational administration or other disciplines that have been successful at recruiting should also prove useful. For instance, the data from Black Issues in Higher Education (Borden, 2000) on the top 100 producers of Black doctoral and Masters students department could easily be used as an initial "spring board" to recruit African-American students. They report that many Ivy League schools have been quite successful in recruiting top African-American candidates. It is not magic if Harvard can graduate 494, African-Americans, John Hopkins, 416, Columbia 525 and Teachers College 294. If these small liberal arts colleges can make the "list", others can too. It seems quite obvious that they recognize the importance of recruiting students of color, and I might add that is down right pitiful that the two Texas Schools that made the list were already HBCU's.

Another area to which we should pay close attention is recruitment of students of color into assistantship positions. It has been well documented that receiving fellowships and assistantships can lead to the development of personal relationships between faculty and students and plays a significant role in rates of graduation (Nettles, 1990). However, many times African-American students are unable to take advantage of privilege. According to a 1998 National Center for Education Statistics report, 25 percent of the 951 African American doctorate recipients had held assistantship positions, while 65 percent of 10,000 visiting international students did (Choy, 1998).

A plausible explanation for this disparity -- funding. Sadly, although membership has its privileges, membership comes at price; and it is expensive. I speak from experience when I say that graduate stipends are low and fellowships are few and far between, especially those that base their awarding criteria other than obtaining high GRE scores. I also feel comfortable in saying that most African-American students are not independently wealthy, therefore this low pay may

add to the reasons why African-American students do not accept assistantships. There are two African-American graduate assistants in our program, and in the college of education in general. Most require additional funding in the form of financial aid or have full-time jobs. Accordingly, the graduate assistantship in our program tends to be attractive to those students who come from wealthy families are financially secure, or foreign students. This is a rarity in African American populations.

4. What would a race-conscious research agenda aimed at developing knowledge that would support students of color in educational administration programs look like?

- The curriculum for some courses would have to take a drastic change. A monolithic pedagogy, particularly in the k-12 realm, just does not "cut it." Race and culture should be discussed throughout the graduate, and undergraduate careers of students in all classes, not just the one required multicultural education course, or by the expert on affirmative action policy, or during black history month.
- In light of the ever changing demographics of the United States, pedagogy would have to include site visits to urban populations. Students would be required to interact with other races and ethnicities in various settings. This would prepare them to be good researchers as well as good administrators. It has been well documented that teachers in urban schools need to possess characteristics and skills in common with the urban environment. This allows them to understand and operate within an environment often indifferent to, their basic professional and individual needs. In addition, it equips the teachers with experiences and knowledge that allows them to understand the community in which they

teach, as well as understand and describe the complexity between the community and the environment without judgment. (Haberman, 1987).

- In fact, Speaking to students, parents of students, and administrators who are ethnically diverse would serve as a wealth of information to support a race-conscious research agenda and school reform. Often, students in the field of education leave the university having formed no substantive relationships with students of color, find themselves experiencing "culture shock" in public education, and leave the field within a few years. Site visits conducted early in the students' career might provide just the forum to begin to think about both race, and to develop a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and differences among people.
- Professors should consider text-books and articles that are considered to be not so "safe" to begin to open-up the discourse on race. Forming groups that would explore and discuss the current writings and research on race and ethnicity would help to facilitate the students' own scholarly agenda, and serve to question dominant paradigms and hence perspectives in general. In addition, articles and discourses that would investigate and question the prevailing epistemologies and "knowledge bases" would also help to begin the discussion. Many researchers have begun the often sensitive task of not only discussing but challenging epistemologies that are embedded and perpetuated through subtle covert and overt forms of racism. They speak about how dominant groups construct or create the world and how this dominance plays a significant role in our current research (Scheurich and Young, 1997). Accordingly, this type of sensitive presentation should play a more pivotal role in our classrooms.

In the final analysis, it should be infused, discussed and required discourse in all of our classrooms throughout our graduate careers. It demands that we not only begin the dialogue but question our practices, and be willing to accept that perhaps this "one size fits all", generic philosophy is no longer and has never been suitable in explaining human behavior, experiences and knowledge.

REFERENCES

Borden, V. (2000). The top 100: Interpreting the idea. *Black Issues in Higher Education., 17* (10), 46-89.

Choy, S., Moskivitz, R., MPR Associates, Inc. and Malizio, A. (1998) Statistical Analysis Report May 1998. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 1995-1996 Student Financing of Graduate and First –Professional Education, 1995-1996, with Profile of Student in Selected Degree Programs. U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research nd Improvement.

Haberman, M. (1987). Recruiting and Selecting Teachers for Urban Schools. New York, N.Y.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education: Reston, VA: Association of Teacher Educators.

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen. (1998). Enacting diverse learning environments: Improving the climate for racial/ethnic diversity in higher education. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report,* 26(8).

Kemp, A.D. (1990). Matriculation to graduation: Focusing beyond minority retention. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 18, 144-149.

Nettles, M. (1990). Success in doctoral programs: Experiences of minority and white students . *American Journal of Education,* 98 (94), 494-522.

Patterson-Stewart, K., Ritchie, M., Sanders, E., (1997). Interpersonal dynamics of African-American persistence in doctoral programs at predominantly white universities. *Journal of College Student Development, 38 (*95), 489-98.

Scheurich, J. and Young, M. (1997). Coloring Epistemologies: Are our research epistemologies racially biased? *Educational Researcher, 26*(4), 4-16.

Suen, H.K. (1983). Alienation and attrition of Black college students on a predominantly White campus. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 24*, 117-121.